

A USEABILITY STUDY OF MARRYWELL.ORG

A THESIS

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BY

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my team. Rob, Amanda and Andrew Meyer who sacrificed time with mom to see her fulfill a dream.

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Abstract

The purpose of this creative project is to report on the beginning stage of a heuristic analysis project. The purpose is to examine the problem of declining marriage numbers that face the Protestant Evangelical community, and address that dilemma in the design criteria of an online dating website. Clarifying values will be part of the analysis of the Evangelical culture inequities. In particular, by assessing Evangelical culture to form the basis of site design, and making recommendations of action that can free it from its current constraints with respect to online dating.

A study of the Marry Well Website will include investigating the perceived problems by the laity in connection with online dating. The research here is predictive in nature, in that the study creates a set of questions that can set in motion further research.

Chapter I: Introduction

Statistics showing population decline in church and faith based organizations, correlate well with the decline of same faith dating and marriage (Wuthnow, 2007). Further, according to Wuthnow, young people marrying within their own faith is a key foundational component in the retention of current church attendance levels.

Some faith leaders believe they can use the tool of online dating to fill more pews, but fewer see it's potential, and a majority avoid the topic entirely. Yet, supporting same faith marriage may be easier thru the use of online dating services.

Specialized markets in online dating represent approximately 47% of the 179 billion dollar growing industry (Market, 2006). Christian Evangelical sites are a niche market within that larger context that consists of all manner of specialized online dating services. Encouraging members of faith-based groups to reexamine their attitude toward online dating could be part of the answer to repacking the pews.

The response to using online dating varies based on the faith group. Latter Day Saints and Catholics, are beginning to see the light of how this tool can help. Jews are modernizing to use the medium. The phenomenological observations of conservative Evangelicals indicates, however, a perceived reluctance to online dating. It appears the more conservative the denomination, the more reluctance to adapt to new technology use. By not actively encouraging the message of marriage plus the use of online dating in any direct method, Evangelicals may be missing a growing opportunity to help their congregations expand thru marriage.

Two primary areas need to be examined:

1. First, why is there a reluctance to encourage marriage in Evangelical Protestantism?
2. What could be done to create an online dating site that would entice the reticent to join?

The purpose of this thesis is to launch an exploratory heuristic analysis and to quantify solutions to encourage same faith based marriages in the Evangelical Protestant church using online dating as a focus method for resolution.

RQ1: How could the design of an online dating site attract more conservative Evangelical users?

Study Rationale

Our personal life stories are woven into the cultural fabric of a technological society. This study is an investigation of how technology and life stories intertwine in a specific culture. Weiser, speaking about technology, said that it weaves “into the fabric of everyday life” (Weiser, 1991). Story and technology are already integrated in the minds of the younger generation. According to Dave Verhaagen, technology is “simply a part of their DNA” (Jayson, 2010). Yet, the Evangelical Protestant subculture may have it’s own influences on media adaptation in contrast to the wider population.

Online dating sites are already reshaping the way the general population seeks a life partner. These sites are an example of the integration of life stories and technology in action. Matrimonial stories that started with online dating occur at a rate of 17%. This percentage outnumbers those who met in church (Newswire, 2010).

Table 1: Primary ways marriage partners meet ¹

1)	Through Work/School	36%
2)	Through Friend/Family Member	26%
3)	Via Online Dating Site	17%
4)	Through Bars/Clubs/Other Social Events	11%
5)	Other	7%
6)	Through Church/Place of Worship	4%

Old-fashioned face-to-face socializing is much more appealing to Religion Surfers than tech-aided interactions with others that are related to faith (Larsen, 2001). The activities of religious surfers include about 3% going to a faith based online dating service (Larsen, 2001). In the general public though, 17% of people now meet online (Newswire, 2010).

A gap appears to be present between religious surfers and the general public. This discrepancy might be because religious surfers prefer face-to-face socializing. Yet, a website can be a tool to bring human connection. Meetup.com (n.d.) is a company that specializes in creating groups, from like-minded individuals, for the purpose of meeting. Meetup.com helps people “find others who share their interest or cause, and form lasting, influential, local community groups that regularly meet face-to-face” (Meetup.com, 2007). In conclusion, discrepancies between the rates of use by secular and religious surfers in computer mediated communication, may diminish with a better understanding by the religious surfers of the role of technology in their personal life stories.

Recent shifts in the influence of culture on the church have impacted the way church leadership and laity view the future. In the 1980’s debates over the use of technology in the church were based on the need for sound reinforcement. Churches

argued about whether using electric microphones encouraged a performance mentality. The jump from flannel graph poster boards to overhead projectors also faced heated debate. Enter the Internet, and we have a new medium causing conflict.

In the article *Surf Here Often*, by Amber Anderson, she shares Neil Clark Warren's motivations.

Warren hopes eHarmony will bring a revolution in the way believers approach spouse selection. 'In the church, we think that if we just pray to God, he'll bring the right person to us [...] we don't even try to understand the principles that govern the selection. [...] What the Bible does provide is an admonition to use our God-created brains in the pursuit of a marriage relationship.' (Anderson, 2001)

Anderson references a story from the Bible found in Genesis 24. The story is that of Abraham's sending a servant and finding his son Isaac a wife. Anderson considers it in modern terms.

Today, Isaac would have access to as many as 2,500 matchmaking sites online; some are devoted specifically to linking believers while most others include religion as a qualifier in the search. [...] The sites are the cyber-version of a church singles social. (Anderson, 2001)

While participation has grown in the use of online dating systems by people of varying religions, groups of conservative Evangelicals are engaging the medium with a more than skeptical view. If properly designed, one could produce an online dating system more conducive to Evangelical church endorsement, providing help to this uniquely conservative Evangelical dilemma. Evangelical Protestant denominations lag

behind in embracing pragmatic solutions to the marriage dilemma, by ignoring the Internet in this way. It is time to incite the church to take action to reverse this detrimental trend.

In Chapter 1 we looked at the problem of a marriage decline. While it is not fully examined because deeper research has to be done to get accurate accounts of the gender ratios in church, we can see a possible decline in first marriages. Chapter 2 will explore what, if anything, is being discussed currently in regards to this topic, unearthing more questions for exploration. Chapter 3 details the online exploration and experimentation that took place plus a brief example of the recommendations made to the web architect. Guidelines are given in chapter 4. Chapter 5 draws conclusions and Chapter six summarizes recommendations for further study regarding this creative project.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to form the initial questions into a reformative action plan, a broad examination of the literature in this area was begun. It revealed that the topic is relatively unexplored. Academic journals such as Pew Internet have only addressed religion and technology within the context of other practices. There were few resources found that directly were associated with the research questions posed.

Tangent issues which effect the research proposal were the only academic resources procured. The hopeful outcome of the examination is to better understand what is necessary to overcome the Evangelical cultural biases or constraints. The application of which would be to involve a turn to new practices in relationship to online dating.

Is there a problem?

In a search for articles it would appear that Evangelical Protestant are just discovering there might be a problem. The problem is the large decline in marriage in the church. A recognition of the trend to older age marriages and the “adult boy” syndrome (a young man who continues to live like an adolescent) are the topics of only a few leadership blogs. Boundless, a young adult branch of Focus on the Family was one of a handful discussing this dilemma in Evangelical circles.

The topic of online dating as a solution to these areas is a nearly silent topic. One Christian author, Candice Watters, devoted six sentences in her book, *Get Married*, (Watters, 2008), merely nodding that online dating existed as an option. Her book is one of a few proactive books challenging Christians to pursue marriage. Neil Clark Warren

founder of eHarmony wrote, *Finding the Love of Your Life* (2005). He shares the basis of his incredibly successful online dating service. It is on the shelves in many Christian bookstores and promotes the use of online dating as a way of searching for a marriage partner, but doesn't look at the connection to repopulating the pews. Some believe the site doesn't align with Evangelical ideology, and is at a best a compromise of what conservative Evangelicals would prefer. Most books are bent on damage control for current marriages.

A Primary Root Cause: Diluting Faith

Statistics demonstrate a surge in crossing denominational boundaries for marriage. In a survey NSFH survey of 1,483 never married young adults, ages 19 to 34, women were asked: "If they would marry someone of a different religion?" 4.20 out of 7 women said they would (Raley, 2000). With these trends, one question to examine is whether online dating participation encourages marrying outside of the faith because of having to immerse in secular dating system. This would be doctrinally problematic per the counsel of scripture to "not be unequally yoked" (1Chor 6:14 New International Version) in the Evangelical Protestant church. Many doctrines exist and are non negotiable to most followers of Christ. However, other perceived doctrines seem to be legalistic interpretations (mans codified rules and not scriptural mandates) and must be overcome. The question remains if the Internet can be used as a constructive tool to bolster same denomination weddings.

Diluted Faith Factor One: Cultural Shifts

Cultural shifts in ideology are being embraced by American society; patterns that are now repeated in the fabric of the church. These include: marrying at a later age, having children later in life, and fewer of them. There is also a growing trend of single men choosing not to marry. Are the same patterns prolific in the church? How can the Internet system of online dating contribute as a tool to help reverse this trend? Robert Wuthnow, Ph.D. Noted, “the decline among younger adults is more severe than we might have supposed”. It appears that the boomers children are attending even less, and their peak attendance level was reached in 1958 (Wuthnow, 2007). He also concluded the following:

The best research on mainline decline shows it mostly resulted from demographics, especially low birth rates and greater intergeneration spacing. (Hout, Greeley, Wilde) That trend now seems to be catching up with conservative Protestant as well, especially as members become better educated and postpone marriage and childbearing. (Wuthnow, 2007)

The root of this problem is not simple to find. However, younger adults and their marital patterns are affecting church attendance.

Add to the recent sociological changes, the category of faith as a mating criteria, and people of faith are facing the proverbial uphill battle.

Diluted Faith, Factor Two: Theological and Ideological Shifts

Trust issues.

A schism exists between those who believe seeking a spouse through prayer is all that is needed, and those who realize more may be required. Doctrine dictates that a believer trusts in God. When examining online dating, many look at it as a way of taking action which could mean a lack of faith in God as the provider. A popular book for conservative Evangelicals is *Passion and the Purity*, by Elisabeth Elliot. She gives many examples of how taking action can be superseding God's work. The message outcome may be unintended, in that a general principle becomes a mandate for no actions except prayer. Many Christians interpret her book to say that no actions except prayer are acceptable.

According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, the average church size in America was approximately 125 in 2000 and has dropped to 75 in 2008. The Median church attendee is one in 400. Nearly 47% of all congregations are under 100 in attendance and 84% are under 350. Mainline or old Protestant denominations may have over 90% under 100 in attendance. 45% are Very conservative and 75% are in a conservative category (Chaves, 2006)

But for Christians, already a minority, the pool [...] is shallower still. According to the 2001 national Church Life Survey, women outnumber men in churches by 22 per cent in every age group. Plus 68 per cent of the congregants are married. (Adams, 2006)

Twenty years ago in the LDS denomination, it was determined that women over 30 would have a minimal chance of ever marrying someone in the denomination.

Marriage to an active male is demographically impossible for many active single females over 30. And even when there are available males, they may possess other characteristics that rule them out as potential mates (Goodman, 1986).

Older people fill the sanctuaries, while those who attend that are in the 20-30's are predominately young married couples. The figures are hard to find regarding how many in the 22-35 year old singles bracket even attend. Estimates refer to a much more dismal ratio, "Sometimes as little as one man to every four or five women", which is at best a vulnerable position for females (Kiesling, 2008).

While young women used to express "everyone else is getting married", they now wonder "who is getting married?". Kent Shaffer quoted that 73% of young men aged 20-30 have never married. This is up 9% from 64% in 2000 (Shaffer, 2007).

Youth in the evangelical church membership are possibly moving away from face to face spouse seeking, and toward seeking spouses online. Only 2% of people now meet a future spouse in church (Madden & Lenhart, 2006). Yet, in the Pew Internet survey of Religion Surfers, the activities of online Religion Surfers indicated that 3% claim to have "used a faith-oriented matchmaking service" (Larsen, 2001). A shift has begun, but it is not yet engrained in the Evangelical culture. A percentage of 20% is needed for it to be recognized as adapted as a norm. The trend may be yet to crest from younger generations who see technology as part of the way they communicate.

Chapter 3: Method

The Evangelical community is a diverse population within it's own culture yet there are unique common characteristics that set its adherents apart from other groups. Those beliefs and values when attempting to design a website create special concerns. Marry Well has adopted a cost effective means of producing a site that meets the varied needs of Evangelical Christians.

Heuristic evaluation is a research approach used to find usability problems in a website. The use of heuristic usability analysis has had a significant growth in the last ten years. Depending on how you set the criteria for your evaluation, you can choose to measure by differing metrics. Some tenets test universal guidelines, or assess website content, critique design and evaluate aesthetics.

User Centered Design includes primary areas of content like text, images, color and document structure being checked for the impact it makes on it's audience.

Usability Testing, judges the site based on the reactions of users to the criteria listed for the test. It also is heuristic in nature, in that different users find unique aspects of the site with differing reactions. Heuristic as defined by dictionary.com is "of, pertaining to, or based on experimentation, evaluation, or trial-and-error methods."

Usability is tested by the users going thru trial and error tests without algorithmic or predetermined courses of action.

The three main categories that will be assessed, are based on the three areas discussed in *Interactivity by Design* by Kristof and Satran. These are Information

Design, Interaction Design and Presentation Design. Further guidelines from the book “Don’t Make Me Think” by Steve Krug, were chosen to support the three categories to be evaluated.

Information Design

Critical elements are involved in the design of information on the website. These specifically include a defining of goals for the product, defining what the audience wants to do, and then deciding how the product will reach it’s audience. (Kristof & Satran, 1995)

Content is the driving force that motivates the users online experience. While interactivity changes the use of the website to the point that,

“The audience, not the designer, now controls the sequence, the pace, and most importantly, what to look at and what to ignore” (Kristof & Satran, 1995)

The designers of the site continually strive to fulfill the expectations of their market, so that their target audience will not disengage.

Four goals that are set forth by Marry Well, will become the litmus test to measure how the site’s content conveys their agenda. Steve Watters conveyed them in an internal document describing the goals:

The Marry Well experience is to be distinctively different than just another website with the label “Christian” attached to it. It will be built on Biblical principles that include:

1. Intentionality toward marriage—Without the goal of discerning “potential for marriage,” today’s relationships drift into recreational friendships. [. . .]

2. Community—Online dating services are notorious for being individualistic and bypassing networks of friends, family and church members. By incorporating the biblical principles of family oversight, life in the body, and intergenerational relationships, our site can offer members the feedback, protection and support of an integrated community, that will increase their likelihood of marrying well.

3. Absolute purity—Dating sites that lack intentionality toward marriage and community involvement, leave singles more vulnerable to sexual temptations. By encouraging members to commit to the principle of absolute purity, that temptation can be more effectively resisted and couples will be less likely to experience the physical bonding of sexual activity that can cloud their judgment and result in poor marriages.

4. Christian compatibility—Most dating sites have a shtick for the best approach to compatibility: through personality tests, birth order or numerous other “dimensions of compatibility.” Not only are these assumptions of compatibility often misguided in light of successful marriages that don’t fit their pattern, but they seem to imply that the best relationships are all about the front-end work of finding the “right” person. The best marriages, however, are built when couples who are equally yoked (2 Cor. 6:14), discern through wise counsel that they are able to better serve God together and commit to live out the “marriage job description” found in Ephesians 5.

(S. Watters, personal correspondence, November 12, 2009)

These goals will become a test for content integration, examining the information design of Marry Well.

Interaction Design

This study is heavily invested in the metrics that are the principles and guidelines given in Steve Krug's first book, *Don't Make Me Think*. Rephrased to interpret his usability criteria, we can apply the guidelines by raising the following questions:

Guideline One: A web page should be self-explanatory. If I have to work too hard or think too much to figure something out, then the page is not self-evident.

Guideline Two: Design the site to accommodate visual scanning. Users don't typically read the site. Users glance through web pages, chose their best option, and behave as if they are reading billboards. They do not process a site entirely logically. Thus, in designing the site with this in mind, it is suggested that you count on them only scanning the site not entirely reading it. The user will also look for their next click or move.

Guideline Three: Choices should be simplified. This can be done by using universal conventions, breaking up areas on a site, keeping the visual clutter down and creating a visual hierarchy. Textual content is important to evaluate. If every word costs you five hundred dollars, would you be more careful in using it?

Guideline Four: Design navigation to be intuitive and universal. The designer can view usability as service or courtesy to the guest in the site. Using persistent navigation elements helps the guest have a sense of direction.

Guideline Five: The “Home Page” must convey the big picture. Design the site based on what the audience is asking for. They want to find what they are looking for. Determine those elements and incorporate them into your Home Page. It is the door to your website make it easy to enter.

Presentation Design

The selection of this approach gives flexibility to the study. The research question must be viewed heuristically because the site is an ever-changing mechanism. The site designer has already processed many of the recommendations that were made by the researcher in initial phases.

“Presentation is the style and layout of the elements on the screen. These elements are the content and controls you’ve defined by answering the questions “What is the product?” and “How should it work?” Part three addresses the question “How should it look?” (Kristof & Satran, 1995)

Conclusion

Using a heuristic evaluation of the site for www.marrywell.org allows for a pragmatic approach to analyzing the research questions. These included the areas of information design, interactive design and presentation design. Information design will address the needs of the content involved in connecting to the target audience. Interactive Design elements will allow for a specific focus on the primary elements of usability as defined by Krug. Finally, the presentation design will help

us understand the relationship between the users and how the visual elements influence their interpretation of the site.

Chapter 4: Findings

The organization of Marry Well is arriving at a pivotal moment in the religious timeline. One reason is the massive decline in church attendance overall and by single males particularly, thus creating a need for the service. Marry Well is needed as a tool to involve these young people in the pursuit of intentionally seeking marriage.

This chapter will share the findings from the evaluation to give answers to the research question that has been presented in Chapter 2. The findings from this analysis focus on three main focal areas: *Information Design*, *Interaction Design*, and *Presentation Design*.

Information Design

Using the primary criterion that was designated in Chapter 3 Methods, how did the Marry Well website fare? The primary content criteria was based on the metric of how well can the Marry Well site achieve its initial content goals. The site has been tracked thru various phases of its design. However, the primary analysis of the site is based on its appearance as of January 25, 2010. A summary of the results will be presented here by looking at whether the site meets the Marry Well goals as set forth in their own documentation.

The four primary goals for content as designated by the Marry Well team in the information design phase are conveying “Intentionality toward marriage” focusing on establishing a sense of “community”, promotion of “absolute purity”,

and establishing “Christian compatibility” as a commitment to Biblical principles and not just a personality connection (S. Watters, personal communication, November 12, 2009).

Goal One: Intentionality toward Marriage

The Marry Well website opens with the Marry Well logo and tagline “Marry Well a better path to marriage”. From the first impression, the site can be identified as a marriage site, and not just a dating service. On the upper right hand corner screen is a graphic on the front home page that says, “is this community for you?”, with the invitation to, “Take Our Marry Well assessment” (Appendix B). Clicking on this graphic will open a pop-up window. The window has text that asks eight questions. These are designed to educate the user of the Marry Well community. One statement says that this site is not for you if “just looking for casual relationships with no interest in getting married anytime soon?” These phrases convey strongly the message that this site is geared towards a process that moves the user towards marriage.

While the intentional marriage message is evident in the logo and tagline, the user of the site may entirely miss it in the Marry Well assessment, by not selecting it. A good question to ask then would be, “Is the marriage minded message presented in another way via a quick scan about the front page?” (Appendix B). This needs to be apparent. In the middle section a constant text box includes, “the Marry Well Guide applies biblical insights as navigational principles at each step along the path to a lifelong and thriving marriage”, which could also be overlooked. It could

obviously be missed as well, because the user will be looking for the logical first click. A stronger presence of this premise should be inculcated into the design.

Goal Two: Community

The researcher is also a leader for mentors and references on the site. As a participant in the site, comments that would not be able to be viewed by others are available. As an associate consultant of the site, user comments that would not be available to everyone are accessible by myself. Comments made might be positive at the time of evaluation because of a member's inexperience with the site and of its participant's hopefulness. The "community" feel is evident in the "Lodge" or forum area. How it expands beyond that at this time, would be difficult to forecast.

Goal Three: Promotion of "absolute purity"

Authors on the site have been writing articles that include the topics of purity. *"Understanding and Overcoming Porn Addiction"* and *"Addressing a Sexual Past"* are two titles. While the commentary on both were brief in comparison to other forum topics, it would be hard to tell how many read the articles. The Marry Well team is making an effort to address the issue.

Having mentors on the site may have an effect in guiding online interactions but offline messages and other systems are not monitored. Strictly controlled access is not the solution, but the obvious reality exists that many people could abuse the system.

Goal Four: Christian Compatibility

A strong emphasis in the “Lodge” area of articles and “Icebreaker” discussions has been directed at the topic of Christian compatibility. Primarily a concerted effort has been made to debunk myths like the article, *Do You Have A Soulmate?*. It is a popular misnomer in Christian circles to believe that God has chosen a single someone special for you instead of giving you choices. Until myths are debunked, many young people on the site will keep their emotions in the forefront of their decision-making.

A positive effect of de-emphasizing the Christian soul mate myth, is that learning about personality compatibility issues does assist those exploring a relationship to better understand communication. Personality is part of the equation in connecting with another person. The matching systems used by other sites do give insight into how to relate to others and understand their frames of reference. Such a system could prove useful to Marry Well.

Design must be balanced with spiritual tenets. Mature adults can use features in a positive or negative way, but the designer has to decide to lead them down a path or not. Marry Well recognizes that human nature has its shortcomings. Based on that assumption, a few areas are still in question as to being a positive or negative to the site. Features that are seen as standard on many sites are missing from Marry Well. It is an intentional decision.

The feature of “who has viewed” someone, illustrates the spiritual impacts made by choosing to exclude a feature because of the negative connotations and actions it can instigate. This feature is omitted intentionally. By using the “viewed

me” feature, users may start to measure their personal value by who has been looking at their profiles. It’s like a popularity meter based on number of views. Members may judge themselves by the standard of person looking at their profiles, creating more mental metrics. If the member believes the “looker” is of value they may evaluate themselves as more worthy. Even though this feature does not designate the motives of why someone was looking, it can lead to false assumptions. If the list is lengthy a girl may start to wonder why she hasn’t been chosen by any of the guys for more contact. The feature is left out on Marry Well because it fosters a comparison mind set which is not scriptural.

Improper comparison would be contrary to spiritual principles. Other features can also inadvertently promote this mentality. Similar to the “viewed me” is the “number of views” which is currently off. If a feature like this is used it would be important to privatize the information to only the profile owner, otherwise it gives statistics for measuring and comparing your profile against others. While Marry Well is numerically small, the tiny numbers of hits could be discouraging, emphasizing the lack of participants and possibly reducing participation.

Marry Well does design the profile page (Appendix C) with an emphasis that conveys spiritual affiliations and faith practices. The questions that define the profile are distinctively different from other sites. Asking participants what pastors, preachers, and teachers that they respect is an aspect that is unique to the site. It is important because Evangelicals typically identify themselves via doctrinal discussions, by sharing who they respect and learn from.

Interaction Design

Usability design criteria, as set forth in Chapter 3, illustrates the primary deficiencies of the MW site at this time. The site was developed with a purchased template and retrofitted to suit the designer's goals. Therefore the design at the time of this evaluation was intended to be only an initial launch vehicle. The goal was to attract users to the site, apply a usability analysis and revise the site with upgrades at a later point in the program. Using the criteria designated in Steve Krug's system for usability analysis, the results were as follows:

Guideline One: A web page should be self-explanatory

Asking the question, "does the user have to think too much?" reveals how self-explanatory the web page may be. The profile page of Marry Well is fairly self-explanatory because it mimics other popular conventions for profile pages (Appendix C). A profile photo can be downloaded, and then categories can be filled out with personal information. It is awkward that there is no mechanism to align/crop/size the photo's. Therefore in the smaller thumbnail people's heads are cropped off while the photos look normal in the enlarged version for the "Photo's" tab.

Descriptions of a person's weight and size are not self-explanatory. Because of the ambiguous terms given to choose from, definitions for the terms would be essential. The current weight categories include thin, medium, and heavy. Words that are too broad in what they encompass. A greater selection of terms similar to other sites might include: stocky, a few extra pounds, athletic, curvy, plus size,

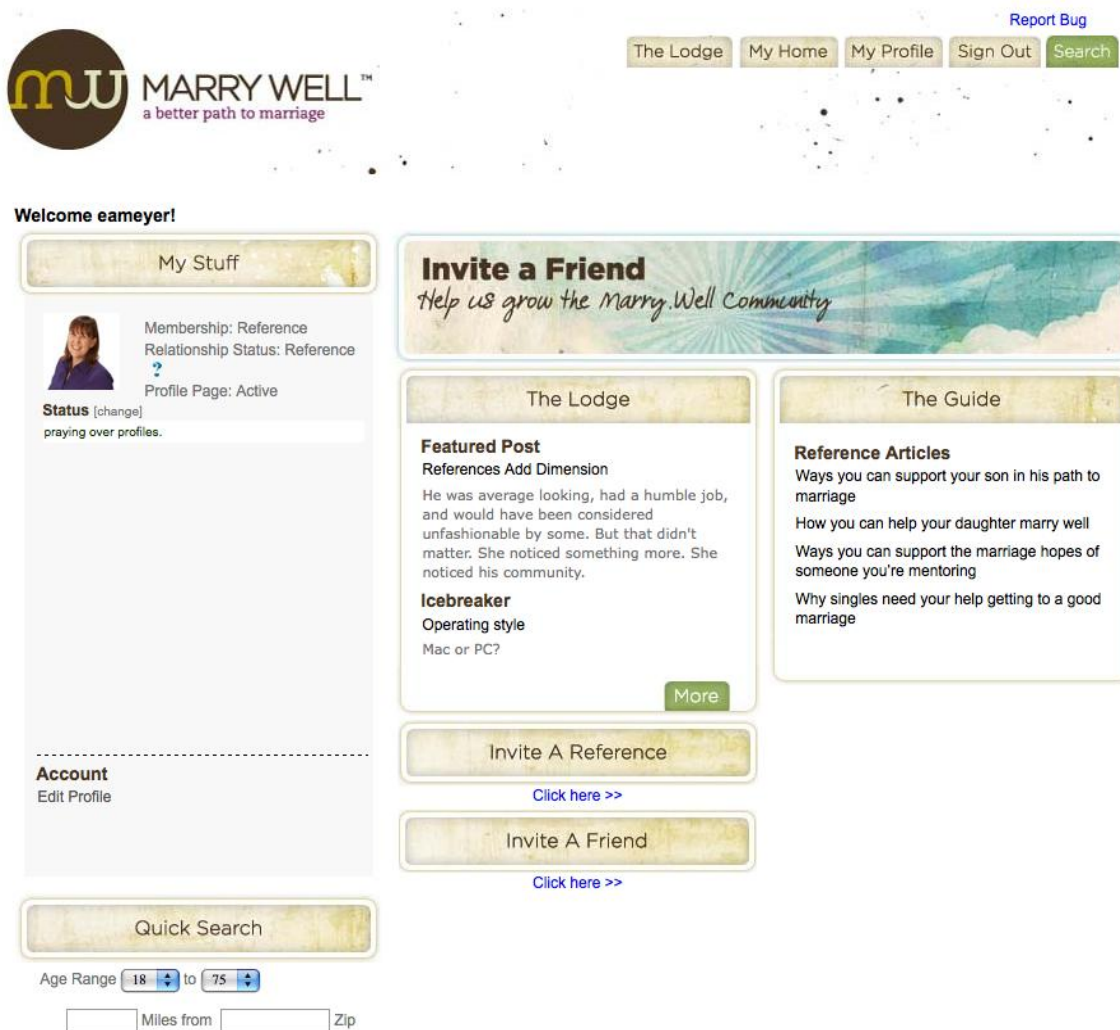
muscular. A new term might include “sizing down” to indicate those making new lifestyle choices. Girls who are not fat can’t choose thin but are forced to choose average. Girls who may be athletic or curvy and not overweight at all don’t feel they have an option currently on the Marry Well site. Some guys who are very muscular are choosing thin because “medium” doesn’t work to acknowledge that they are ok.

Guideline Two: Design the site to accommodate visual scanning

The visual impact of the Marry Well Site at this point, conveys both positive and negative aspects regarding scanning. The average user’s propensity to scan, means that a web page must consider the message that may be conveyed from this process. Steve Krug asks what the users will see if they scan, instead of read, the site.

A positive visual impression of the Marry Well site would include favorable artwork, color schemes and novelty. However, the full impact of the message of the site appears to get lost in the uniqueness of the site. A disconnect exists. Depending on the page you are on, the arrangement of the wireframes (box area portions) still seems to be functional but does not create a primary visual message. Too many visuals compete for your attention, or blank areas contribute to a feel of repetitiveness. Many of the visual elements get in the way of what the user might consider valuable. A simplification of the visual message would be a positive direction for Marry Well to incorporate.

Analyzing the personal home page (figure 1) in light of the scanning process one can pick up several deficiencies from this pages current design.



(figure 1b)

The primary areas that a user will scan are not well used in this design.

The personal home page does not fit entirely into the screen when it first appears on your page. It requires scrolling to see the lower areas. The space on this page has large gaps that waste space.

The priority of information that is placed in prime spots on the page is poorly used. The lower right corner is a choice area for ad placement on any webpage. The

personal home page it is entirely devoid of any unique information. It is wasting prominent location in the architecture of the site to neglect this valuable area. One of the most important purposes for this page is the Edit Profile feature. It is in an obscure location. Mail access was also supposed to come from this page but is missing entirely. The “Lodge” and “Guide” are repeated wireframes of information. They are present on the main page. However, the “Guide” has customized articles for references or members, depending upon your membership type. The guides purpose is primarily conveyed on this page. The “invite a friend” option is in two places on the page. It is redundant. A user may not know that the “invite a friend” banner is clickable at the top section. This is not at all obvious considering web conventions. The “quick search” is misplaced on this page. It should be moved to the top right portion of the header on all pages. It should be moved to the search page or the front profile page where it is sought after as an action.

The designers should consider the goals for the personal home page and what could functional application information it could provide. One suggestion is to add a “Mini Path Path Report”. This would be a motivational element to the training purpose of the site. By replacing the invite a friend banner with a new illustration of a progress path, measured stages could be tallied. A marker would be placed on the path and moved forward as criteria was met. The criteria would promote the educational goals and objectives, by motivating users to watch or read articles. Points could be awarded in a fashion, that when calculated, make the marker move along the path as an indicator.

Guideline Three: Choices should be simplified

Simplifying the visual elements of the site is an imperative upgrade to this site. Visual elements should lead a person to the main inquiry buttons. When it does not, the information sought should be accessible within a few mouse clicks. Visual prioritization through intentional design would be the best way to simplify the site. The “Search Results” page is an area that could be simplified in several ways.

The design of the “Search Result’s” is fairly efficient compared to some sites. The results are sorted by the last time that person was on. This is a great feature because you are not looking at inactive member files. A few profiles were still slipping thru, and their new category designation doesn’t show until you open the profile, but otherwise the system spares the users time and frustration. A side benefit is that active members are rewarded. Their profiles are presented first, allowing more people to notice them in the list hierarchy.

Profile search results do not include people who are outside of the parameters of your search. On the popular site, Christiancafe, age brackets are coalesced and not eliminated when you request a specific criteria. This is designed to make the site appear that it has more possibilities from the search. However, it is not honest. The Marry Well site’s system works for a small number of people, but it will not work well as the site’s membership expands.

The “Search Results” system will be cumbersome later when more users are on the site. Currently, a list of profiles with large descriptions is the product of a search. While the number of matches is small, this is helpful in introducing people.

However, as the site matures it will be necessary to simplify the search results system because the number of matches will be too many to for its current format.

Simplifying language and verbal elements would help users have a better online experience. One adage is asked, “if every word cost X number of dollar’s would you include it?”. This should be applied to this site. The site is not verbose, but it uses language that is more for someone who is already familiar with what the function does. Newcomers have a more difficult time understanding what a “Lodge” is, or what an “Icebreaker” might be. Instead, terms like “forum” should be used for sharing the idea that it is a communication area for all.

The area that needs the most simplification is the Home Page (figure 2)



(figure 2)

First impressions of the Marry Well Home Page create a feeling of being overwhelmed. It is not intuitive. Because it is busy and has too many complex visual areas, you are not guided to know where to go to get information.

The initial priority questions a new person would ask are not answered on the home page. These questions are:

1. What is the purpose of the site?
2. How does this site meet my needs?

3. Can I search the site as guest?
4. How can I search for profile candidates in my area?
5. Is there a membership fee?

Marry Well has a membership structure. It is a monthly fee unless you choose “member til marriage”. Even though it is a ministry, a fee was decided upon to help screen out those who are not serious and will not invest in seeking a spouse. The site inadequately addresses these questions leaving people to wonder about the value of participating.

Too many options add to the complicated feel. People don’t know where their first click on the front page should be. The language on this page lacks universal terminology, adding to a confused response, ie: the “lodge” is a forum and “member updates” are statuses. Frequently asked questions arise from the design shortcomings. The users appear to continue to muddle through until they find a pattern that works. Simplifying options to direct the flow of a user to information would be an important improvement to make.

Guideline Four: Design the navigation to be intuitive and universal

While a experienced webs users on Marry Well probably would be familiar with universal components to maneuver the site, others were feeling a bit lost. They could stumble through, but an intuitive process in many areas was not in place. One primary interest of the user was served, in that most were able to launch profiles. Searching for matches was also a top priority.

Common areas of frustration were initially usability issues for navigation in finding a way back through the pages. The universal function of a locator such as, “you are here”, for where you were in the site was not working well at this point. Tabs could be added at the top right. In the above illustration only three tabs were available. The active tab does not change color or highlight when activated. Basic locators would help decrease frustration.

The search page navigation is somewhat confusing. There is a delay in pull down menus. If you do not wait, you don’t know that there is a way to enter search criteria for a state or city specifically. The quick search is at the bottom. This normally is a feature on many home pages. The designer needs to account for these usability issues to help better the user’s experience.

A prime criterion is to design a site with the view that usability is a service or courtesy. As the researcher has interacted with the primary design team members it is evident that they hold this view. Budgetary concerns and timetables are the obstacles that preclude much of the design moving up a level. These concerns will be reassessed for usability issues in navigation, in the future.

Guideline Five: The “Home Page” must convey the big picture

The home page is the main door to a business. The Marry Well design is colorful, clever, and uniquely appealing to men. However, it is confusing, busy, and geared toward people already using the site, but not newcomers.

Analysis of the HOME PAGE: (Appendix B) was covered in part during guideline two and three. In addition to the analysis in that section further consideration includes:

1. Adding Navigation buttons. Navigation buttons to go back to Main Page on top tabs. The purpose of a Home page is to navigate to things “inside” of the program. Perhaps 3- 6 navigation buttons on their own at the bottom would be helpful. Choose the most requested desires of new users and current members.
2. A frequently asked question page is needed.

Presentation Design

How does the Marry Well website “look” is to be determined by elements of visual theme, layout and structural elements (Kristof & Satran, 1995). Here are the findings on these areas.

The Marry Well visual theme is a novel character sketch. “The Lodge” is the best looking page on the website at this time. The thematic element of being at “the Lodge” of a ski resort is the connection that users get to go there and relax, while talking and meeting new people. While this is not clear, the page is visually stimulating and fun, with a bold color scheme and character drawings. The use of white space and the placement space between elements needs to be readjusted.

Correcting layout positions would enhance the look. Fixing wireframe spacing would add to the visual cohesiveness of “the Lodge” page. “The Lodge” needs a shift to left with extra space. Several frames make the page off balance

because they are not centered to the page. On the personal profile page, “My Stuff box” is way too big. The status box would be nice in a bigger size just under the member’s name and should be better aligned. Images that don’t fit into a natural screen size, making scrolling necessary, could be eliminated.

Simple alterations and structural elements would reinforce the stylistic unity. The small arrows used for search buttons on the site, go with the theme, but because of their placement are distracting. Using a different shape making them look more like directional “signposts” on a trail, would unify them with the rest of the page. The signs don’t need to be uniform, but must create harmony with the rest of the visual environment.

The Marry Well visual elements are working well. The visual theme is fun. The visuals have been commented upon by men as favorable, which is the gender it was primarily targeted to appeal to. The layout of the site needs readjusted but has potential with just simple changes. It would seem that the structural elements can easily be brought to bring a tighter, more cohesive overall mood to the visual palate.

Research Questions

RQ1: How could the design of an online dating site attract more conservative Evangelical users?

Can a website cater to the needs, values and beliefs of a distinctively Evangelical culture? Would those in that culture be receptive to the technology as a tool, if obstacles that challenged religious beliefs and values were alleviated? The answer is as yet, incomplete. At this point it would still be based on predictions.

However, a general receptivity has been seen in the target demographic. They have responded positively by becoming members on Marry Well. Using online dating as a communication tool in the Evangelical community is new territory.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Marry Well may be offering a unique service because of its customized design for the Evangelical Community. In doing so, it may have an influence in the culture of the Evangelical Protestants. This may be achieved in small steps thru the strategy of how Marry Well will effect the dialogue about online dating in this community.

Marry Well encourages Evangelicals to reexamine their own history and doctrines and apply them in the context of modern technological methods. We may not ride a camel to a well to find a Rebekah like the one in Genesis 24, but we may travel via the Internet. While general stigmas against online dating may exist, Marry Well is moving towards removing those barriers specific to the Evangelical community by its unique service and design.

Conclusion One: Mary Well Should Continue to Address Design Dilemmas in the Context of Doctrinal and Evangelical Cultural Issues

The goal of designing features with Evangelical cultural aspects in mind, can be pursued by including religious customizations. For instance, the feature “religious affiliation” when expanded offers informational selections to share faith level, active participation in church, and denominational classifications. Another special feature allows the participant to identify with Evangelical community leaders. Evangelicals tend to use association with a leader to help categorize their doctrinal positions. This type of design criteria specifically targets the audience need. The hope is that Evangelicals receptivity will be increased because of the special designs allowing them to readily

associate their doctrinal stands and positions better clarifying the type of match that would be suited to their deepest beliefs.

These design areas include educational elements to help inform and persuade participants to be intentional about marriage. While character and trust issues will always be a dilemma, pre-screening mechanisms and added community oversight will put more safeguards in the Marry Well system than the average Christian dating site. The principle goal is that a set of dating or courtship protocols, must be established in order to better facilitate marriage driven relationships.

By creating a website that possesses a strong educational and process oriented message as part of its content, a pattern of training can be developed and applied. The goal is to lead participants thru a standardized educational content base. Educational sections offered in the online dating site could clarify and quantify principles and terms. Short videos could be a medium to further share the educational message to participants. The progressive steps of an educational component of Marry Well would be a unique approach to guide young adults. Marry Well would encourage a systemized approach which would include the participation of the culture and community.

The church could start connecting young people in person and online with the support of Marry Well resources. Perhaps the art of matchmaking needs to be revived in Evangelicals. Using online services in conjunction with that would be useful especially for small congregations.

Church members should help by being personally involved in the lives of singles, through both effectual prayers and thoughtful set-ups (Maken, 2008).

Educational sections will be undergirded with the credibility of well known leaders in the Evangelical community. This will translate into greater acceptance of a new system because of the trustworthiness of the leaders endorsing the site. Leaders will be able to access material for their congregations.

Marry Well's success may be directly correlated to how it supports and works with the current systems in place in the Evangelical Community. By assuming the declared role of a support and resource base to churches may have a bearing on how Marry Well integrates into the larger Evangelical community.

Ideology Features

The initial goals of Marry Well were to gain the interest of Evangelical Protestants. This appears to be initially successful in that the current membership of Marry Well as of May 26, 2010 has become comprised of the type of Evangelicals that the website was hoping to attract. This may be due in part due to the intentional removal of ideology based barriers (i.e., abstinence, denominational affiliation and testimony). Marketing aspects could also account for the initial interest of the more conservative Evangelicals examining the website. If ideological barriers had been left in place, this might not have occurred. A predominant number of members come from denominations that label themselves Southern Baptist, Reformed, and Non-Denominational. This indicates that the wariness of some potential members from conservative denominations may be overcome through the design and functions chosen based on the target demographics' ideology.

The features designed to address the ideological concerns have made many feel they are in a like minded group for potential matches. A direct correlation between the Marry Well design and this result, can not be accurately measured at this time. However, comments on the website have included that many feel “safer”. A sense of “community” is also noted by participants. Other aspects of the website that have received positive comments include: the inclusion of mentors’ participation on the site, and that the profile questions communicate more accurate belief descriptions than other sites.

Expressing one’s own ideology is made easier by the use of functions that identify spiritual ideals and preferences. While there is an inherent danger of self-reporting in the creation of a spiritual level declaration, it must still occur. Participants may find the whole idea that they can rate their faith level by a number, a hard concept to accept. Instead of this, questions are asked that would indicate involvement in a faith community, and their connections to that community. An area for testimonies and spiritual involvement are also part of the profile. In comparison to other sites this has the most focused design to share delineating factors of faith.

Conclusion Two: Site specific Designs need to be addressed

The Guidelines for a website as delineated by Krug should be used as the new metrics to develop an improved Marry Well site. First, the Marry Well main page in a revamped form should instantly convey its main goals and missions, in a simple but concise fashion. Second, the areas used in the page design should be prioritized in hierarchical manner, to use space and white space more productively for the purposes of interaction. Simplifying the processes that Marry Well members use on a regular basis, would be a third way to move toward a better experience for users.

Navigation on the site was functional at the time of the evaluation, albeit not expeditious for regular patterns and functions users perform. Thus, with a revision in the priorities of the site, the new navigation could be more purposeful. Finally, a more intuitive home page, which simply clarifies the purpose of the site, will serve as the door to helping expand the site's impact in the Evangelical Community.

Conclusion Three: The Gender Specific Design of Marry Well and Marketing Efforts for Men are Making a Difference in Attracting Men to the Site

An effort to engage men included design choices, special promotions, and strategies that might increase male participation on Marry Well.

The overall graphic design chosen was specifically more masculine with a brown theme. This theme conveys, "Connotations of brown, warm, conservative, earthy, natural, down-to-earth, wholesome, friendly" (McNeil, 138). The colors are warm hues with a turquoise blue accent. A rough textured appearance makes the site feel more rugged without going to a stereotypical male look. A rough hewn messy look was selected, with character sketches used to simulate people instead of having real pictures. A camping lodge was one of the visual elements and part of the interactive theme. Thematic choices avoided a typical feminized version of the site ie: wedding pictures, beautiful gowns etc. Results so far indicate a positive direction. The gender balance when Marry Well started was a ratio of women to men at 10:1 and is stated by the MW administrator as approximately 2:1 at the current time. The ratio of men to women was counted by Mike, a member, who wrote this on the site's wall. He is reporting in the brackets a ratio of women to men in that order.

Those with a profile photo only** - logged on within last 7 days: 2.43 (180/74) -
 logged on within last 14 days: 2.64 (253/96) - logged on within last 21 days: 2.49
 (284/114) - logged on within last 29 days: 2.50 (315/126) (Mike, 2010)

A closing of the gap in gender ratio, may be due in part to the specific marketing and design for men

There is a lack of effort placed on attracting women to the site. If Marry Well seeks high caliber potential connections for Christian men, it will draw men to the site. A strategy of some local pubs is to have a ladies night because the more women you have the more men will attend, but Marry Well has not yet applied this type of tactic. As a comment noted, “there aren’t enough women on the site yet because my status hasn’t changed to “exploring” (Silverfire, 2010). Exploring status means you have met someone and are now in an intentional relationship. By not inclusively targeting women, Marry Well may be narrowing its appeal to men. The ratios of men to women may be narrowed percentage wise, but the men get a smaller total pool of women to choose from in that scenario. Men want a large selection of women who are closer in location. If Marry Well would promote the site to women as well, the pool of available matches might increase, bringing more men, and women, to the site.

The design elements of the site are directed to men, but content inside the site also affirms men, to be men. The site has undergirded its message with resources that deal with male issues. Articles included in conveying this message include: *Men and Marriage, Understanding and Overcoming Pornography addiction*, and *For Adults Only* an article on men growing up. Articles posted are designed to create a new dialogue that is male friendly, male inclusive, and much more male oriented. *Marry Well Young Man*

is just one of many titles that advocate the man as the primary target audience. This article pictures relationships in a male context of adventure, stagecoaches, and pursuit. Pursuit and action is a constant theme in the articles that are posted in The Lodge section of the site.

The gender specific targeting may be accomplishing a goal, but a broader approach may be needed for the site's success. On one level, the marketing strategy may be gleaned positive results in a better man to woman ratio, but by only targeting men it may inadvertently diminish its goal to attract men. Opening the marketing efforts to be more gender inclusive might help boost overall success in bringing males to the site.

Conclusion Four: Marry Well has the Potential to Become a Voice of Leadership in the Evangelical Community

Leaders in the Evangelical community look for other leaders in order to gain resources for their own ministries. The Marry Well environment will provide this resource. Educational video's and a progress check sheet will help serve participants with processes like discipleship programs. Already, Marry Well is present on many social networking sites sharing the articles and resources it has developed. The idea is to create a more viral presence in sharing its material. By enlisting the support of prominent voices in the Evangelical community, Marry Well is establishing its credibility. The goal is to build a surge of interest in a common and shared new ideal that will change the Evangelical culture's approach to marriage.

CHAPTER 6: Recommendations for Further Study

The results of this report will be shared with those who are interested in participation groups that will be formed to discuss the results, the implications, new questions, and recommendations for further design implementations. The reflection phase has not yet been processed.

The following areas of action could be taken:

1. Develop a cohesive recommended dating system/pattern and marriage message to share with churches, and investigate what might be a workable solution. The structure of this dating system would be built, not on a compatibility emphasis, but with a goal of teaching people how to find a mate that will keep a marriage covenant.
2. Continue to research the faith level of those currently participating on sites. Develop a way to designate faith levels more effectively and attract deeper faith level participants.
3. Delve into seeking a better understanding of how to transfer from online systems to face to face. Examine the potential for building a connection to Skype into the system. Let the local church have a webcam and have a conversation in an online church social room. Create a conversion system or set of recommendations based on further research. This transition was a missing or extremely limited element in many of the books investigated for this report.
4. Investigate the types of obstacles that inhibit churches from integrating the use of computer-mediated communications as a part of their congregational life.

5. Develop an extended viral marketing plan to reach a greater number of participants. Design ways to make it easier for members to participate in disseminating invitations and articles related to the site. A Christian online environment would be helped immensely by increasing prospects of finding suitable matches. The numbers in local areas are small. Involvement in notifying and obtaining church endorsements would be a target for the marketing of the site. More memberships could minimize the distance factor. This currently deters membership levels as those who do a trial membership find the scarcity of local connections a reason to not subscribe.
6. Explore the differences brought about by gender, denomination, and educational levels as filters, and examine the effect these have on site content. An example would be to discuss how men are visual beings, and how conveying this to Evangelical women might be important. Many women may have a false expectation that men of character can look beyond the physical. Addressing the way this plays out in an online Christian environment could help retention rates.
7. Study the levels of persona revelation on the site. Currently, Marry Well does not use chatting, because the development team assumes that it usually elevates short sentence quips instead of leading to deeper communication. Online chatting may inhibit the way people interact, but further study would be needed to see what levels of communication are reinforced by using Chat. Chatting may impede a faster move to stages that are more accurate in persona revelation. Skyping is presently encouraged as a more direct path to

understanding the prospective match. These assumptions need to be validated by further research.

As a Marry Well advisor, online mentor and parent of a user on the site, it has provided the author with a unique perspective. Living in the Evangelical Protestant culture, and listening to the community interact on the site, has led me to the following conclusions. This comment by a user from Christian Cafe, summarizes some of those conclusions.

“I’m from a small town in Indiana and attend a fairly small church. Needless to say there aren’t a whole lot of Christian women who love and serve God to choose from. I try to be used in my church as much as the Lord sees fit so I can’t exactly be church hopping looking for dates, which is what brings me here. I try to live a separated life which makes even making friends challenging at times. It’s the same story many Christians have but maybe this site will prove to be a blessing and great tool to meet other Christians.” (Mldobby517, 2009)

A shift in the view of some parents involved in researching and participation during the phases of this project has demonstrated the possibility of others changing also. Some parents previously opposed to arranged marriages, group dating and early commitments, or opposite sex interactions with a purpose of marital training are now asking new questions. How do we do this? The theories surrounding this topic continue to change. The issues at hand are reflective of the current concerns regarding young men’s roles and participation in the process of courting, and what can be done to engage them.

It is time to reexamine Evangelical ideals on how to pursue mates. Forming the next plan of action will involve making sure the ideas proliferated are well researched in

order to provide credibility. An ongoing and changing market creates only a glimpse of how results were achieved by Marry Well at a juncture in time. This does not entirely reflect on the strength of those outcomes or the future projection of the sites potential.

The stewardship of technology as a force for good in culture is an important role for technologists, entrepreneurs, educators, and Christian leaders.” (Barna, 2008)

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APPENDIX A: PERSONAL HOME PAGE SCREEN SHOT




MARRY WELL
a better path to marriage

[Report Bug](#)
[The Lodge](#) [My Home](#) [My Profile](#) [Sign Out](#) [Search](#)

Welcome eameyer!

My Stuff



Membership: Reference
Relationship Status: Reference
Profile Page: Active

Status [\[change\]](#)
praying over profiles.

Account
[Edit Profile](#)

Quick Search

Age Range to
 Miles from Zip

Invite a Friend
Help us grow the Marry Well Community

The Lodge

Featured Post
References Add Dimension
He was average looking, had a humble job, and would have been considered unfashionable by some. But that didn't matter. She noticed something more. She noticed his community.

Icebreaker
Operating style
Mac or PC?

[More](#)

Invite A Reference

[Click here >>](#)

Invite A Friend

[Click here >>](#)

The Guide

Reference Articles
Ways you can support your son in his path to marriage
How you can help your daughter marry well
Ways you can support the marriage hopes of someone you're mentoring
Why singles need your help getting to a good marriage

APPENDIX B: HOME PAGE


MARRY WELL™
 a better path to marriage

[Share](#)
[already a member? Sign in here](#)

[About Us](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Send to a Friend](#)

What is Marry Well all about? Take our tour.



Is this community for you?

Take our **Marry Well** assessment.



Join now to receive special introductory rates. [Sign Up Now!](#)

The Lodge



Featured Post
References Add Dimension

He was average looking, had a humble job, and would have been considered unfashionable by some. But that didn't matter. She noticed something more. She noticed his community.

Icebreaker

The Guide



Overview of the Marry Well Guide

The Marry Well Guide applies biblical insights as navigational principles at each step along the path to a lifelong and thriving marriage. [Read More>>](#)

What's the story behind Marry Well?

Member Update



folklore
Jan 25

Please pass the umbrella and stash away your coat, it's 52 degrees in January!



Jenn
Jan 25


Enjoying fresh brownies and falling snow... a peaceful winter evening.



anewthing
Jan 25

The clouds aren't crying. Gorgeous San Diego


APPENDIX C: PROFILE PAGE



MARRY WELL™
a better path to marriage

[The Lodge](#)
[My Home](#)
[My Profile](#)
[Sign Out](#)
[Search](#)
[Report Bug](#)

[Home](#) » [My Profile](#)



Sex: A Reference
Age: 51
City: Mooresville
Relationship Status: Preparing

[About Me](#)
[Photos](#)
[References](#)


Basic Info

Faith	
Denomination	Reformed Baptist
Church involvement	Creative Arts, large group organizer, currently working with an Acts 29 plant.
Social	
Occupation	Professor Bible College, Digital Storyteller
Education	Masters Degree
Location	
Country	United States
City	Mooresville
State/Region	Indiana
ZIP/Postal code	46158

Updates


Status: praying over profiles.

Add comment




[Jen7707](#)
 Yesterday 18:47 [delete](#)

I agree! 😊




[RLKUSMC](#)
 Yesterday 11:09 [delete](#)

Ok thanks



[AndreaElena](#)
 Jan 23, 10 at 12:02am [delete](#)

Ah, but see y'all are in Indiana. Nashville's a "fur piece" from there! Thanks for the invite, though. Loved Return to Cranford, but I think I caught it a little late. I want to get all the DVDs and watch them one after the other so that I've got context. I thought Jonathan Pryce did an excellent job. He's such a versatile actor! Hmm... probably have heard Irish Rovers and Clannad and like their stuff... or would like it if I haven't heard it. I catch "The Thistle and Shamrock" on NPR sometimes, so that's where I would've heard it likely. Thanks for posting on my "wall"! 😊



[AndreaElena](#)
 Jan 22, 10 at 07:45pm [delete](#)

APPENDIX D: Marriage Statistics

IN THE GENERAL POPULATION : FIGURE 2

Percentage of All Persons Age 15 and Older Who Were Married,
by Sex and Race, 1960-2007, United States.

MALES FEMALES

Year	Total	Blacks	Whites	Total	Blacks	Whites
1960	69.3	60.9	70.2	65.9	59.8	66.6
1970	66.7	56.9	68.0	61.9	54.1	62.8
1980	63.2	48.8	65.0	58.9	44.6	60.7
1990	60.7	45.1	62.8	56.9	40.2	59.1
2000	57.9	42.8	60.0	54.7	36.2	57.4
2007b	54.7	38.5	56.9	51.2	30.0	54.3

Includes races other than Black and White.

In 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau expanded its racial categories to permit respondents to identify themselves as belonging to more than one race. This means that racial data computations beginning in 2004 may not be strictly comparable to those of prior years.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P20-506; America's Families and Living Arrangements (www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2007/tabA1-all.pdf).